1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19

776 and yet their priests give him twenty names, in their songs. These names, so far as I could ascertain, all refer to his qualities. One Bri-bri, whom I had with me as a servant for over half a year, and from whom I obtained much valuable information, particularly in regard to the language, said to me, "Why do you foreigners ask us how many Gods there are? There is only one, and that is *Si-bu'*."

The Devil, or devils, are minor personages, who receive no worship of any kind. They are called, *Bi*, by the Bri-bris and Cabecars, *Au* in Tiribi, *Auk* in Terraba, and *Ka-gro'* in Boruca. The devil is generally malevolent, but does not seem to be specially feared. *Bi* among the Bribris is a term also used for a variety of lesser devils, or evil spirits who have special missions, like making people sick, &c. Some of these in-
776 habit the less frequented parts of the forests and mountains, and are
778 very jealous of their domains. People entering an unfrequented region, make as little noise as possible. If they make the local *Bi* angry with their noise, he will revenge himself by a shower or by causing somebody
[753] to fall and hurt himself, or to be bitten by a snake, &c. A person who has once been in these places can return with less risk, but all new-comers must keep at least a comparative silence. Another class of beings inhabit the rocks on the summits of certain mountain peaks. They live *inside* the rocks, not among them, consequently their habitations are undistinguishable to mortal eyes. They seem to have the same habits as ordinary humans. One of these peaks, a mile or two across a cañon, in front of a place called Sar-we, is thus inhabited according to the accounts of the people of Sar-we. They told me of hearing singing, the beating of drums, &c., coming from that direction. The configuration of the hills is such that a glance showed me, that a drum beaten at certain of the houses in the cañon of Urun, would echo back from this hill to Sar-we and thus account for the sounds. These people of the *U-jums*, as the naked peaks are called, are said to be the owners of the tapirs which roam through these solitudes. They are very jealous of their domains and cause, by some occult means, the death of any one who dares approach their homes. I could not induce an Indian to accompany us to the summit of Pico Blanco, partly on account of *bu-ku-ru'*, and perhaps more still for fear of the people of the *U-jum* or peak. In addition to
776 these beliefs, they also believe in the efficacy of incantation by their *Asens* or doctors, of whom more immediately; and further in certain ceremonies or observances of their own. I have seen a woman carefully collect a bunch of some weed and taking it to the river wash her face, neck,
[226] breast, and arms with it. This was to bring good luck to the men who were at the time at work turning a stream to dry its bed, for the purpose of catching fish. She had her reward; hundreds of fish of 2 to 4 pounds weight were captured, and of a quality as fine as shad.

824 There is a peculiar wood, of which I shall have occasion to speak
[293] further on, used only for walking sticks for the chiefs and more eminent
[481] persons. The growing tree is unknown and it is only obtained by the

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
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Cacao is in great demand. The delicious sub-acid pulp is first sucked from the beans, which are roasted and ground on the chicha board, or stone into a coarse paste. It is the greatest luxury they possess. And still, I have never seen a young cacao tree belonging to an Indian. They depend for their supply on the old trees, planted by past generations. I have known an Indian make a two days' journey to collect a little cacao, when less labor would plant him fifty trees near his house. 222 272

Fishing is rarely performed with hook and line. They have two methods. One is to shoot the fish from a canoe (all the canoes belong to foreigners), or from the shore, or a rock. They use very long arrows, described previously, and are quite expert. Another method is to select a channel of the river beside an island. A frame-work is built at each end, of sticks and cane, which extend completely across the stream. When everything is ready, the people stationed at the upper end rapidly cover the frame-work with the leaves of the cane, so as to stop the water running through. Those at the lower frame, also spread on cane leaves, but thinner, only so as to keep the fish from passing through. Both parties must work at the same time, and as rapidly as possible, because as soon as the fish find the level of the water lowering they attempt to escape, and I was told that it has sometimes happened that every fish has gotten away before the dams were finished. In the course of a few hours the water is so low that the fish congregate in the deeper pools and are shot with arrows, or even taken out by hand. 226

The only divisions of time known are the natural astronomical ones: the day, the lunar month, and the year. A glance at the vocabulary will show that special words are used for day in the abstract as distinguished from night, and for to-day, to-morrow, day after to-morrow, &c., and for yesterday, &c. The month is called by the same name as the moon, "*si.*" The year is counted from dry season to dry season, and is recognized by the ripening of the flower-stalks of the wild cane, on which they depend for arrow-shafts. It is called *da-was'* from this connection. 805

The local diseases of the country are fevers, acquired by going to the coast; or by the hill people, by going down to the low lands. They sometimes seem to become epidemic, due to an unusually wet season, or to the continuance of the rains throughout what should be a dry season. The summer of 1874 was particularly fatal in this respect. Rheumatism is common, especially with the older men. It is brought on by much exposure to rain, and by wading rivers when heated, on journeys. But the commonest infirmities are indolent ulcers, usually on the legs. They originate from any little scratch or bruise, and are the result of the low vital state of the system, due to a bulky but innutritious diet. A wound which, in a person in good health, would heal in a week, may result with one of these people in a sore lasting years, and perhaps at times involving an area twice as large as the hand. 164

Of remedies, they may be safely said to have none. They are learning 757

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

natives will admit. This penalty may be avoided, however, by calling in the services of the nearest shaman, who removes the taboo, or *búkuru*, by blowing upon the object and singing certain songs to the accompaniment of his medicine rattle. The following day it may be handled and disposed of with impunity.

Fish Traps.—Fish are taken by blocking small tributaries of a river and stranding them, by shooting with arrows or catching them in traps. Unfortunately none of these processes was observed, but pl. XXIX reproduces a photograph of a tributary of Coen river across which a temporary dam had been made to divert the course of the stream and leave the fish high and dry.

At this point we may mention the Bribri method of crossing swollen streams by means of the ingenious device of weighting themselves with heavy stones borne on the shoulders (pl. XXX). The writer did not have the good fortune to witness this performance, but we are enabled to introduce the accompanying illustration through the

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

226
227
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PL. XXVIII

BRIBRI MEN FISHING

SKINNER—BRIBRI

[facing p. 92]

262 825 fish are eaten when the Indians go to the Pacific coast for salt. A large and small clam which come from the coast are also favorite foods.

224 The *Boruca* prefer to hunt in groups of two or three and without dogs. Their favorite time for hunting is when the moon is new, and, strangely enough, on Tuesday and Thursday. Night hunting is almost never practised, as this is the time when the poisonous snakes roam, the most dreaded of which is the bushmaster (*Lachaesis muta*). Traps are 223 used for birds, and are generally placed in the rice fields or in the corn fields. The traps are made by the men with cane (*Gynerium sagittatum* [Aubl.] Beauv.) and are box-shaped, but without a bottom. They are placed in the fields with food inside and sustained at one end by a small stick which is broken in two, but is balanced one end on top of the other. A string is fastened to one portion of the broken stick, and is left on the ground next to the food. The bird enters the trap, and walking, moves the string, which in turn pulls aside the piece of stick, and the box drops, imprisoning the bird. Sling shots are used by the boys to [411 177] shoot birds. The bow and arrow for hunting have entirely disappeared, their place being taken by the shot gun and rifle.

● 226 [824 278] Fishing. The *Boruca* have five ways of catching fish. One manner is with a vine (*Serjania cornigera* Turcz.). They also mash the bark of the *espavel* (*Anacardium excelsum* [Bert. & Balb.] Skeels) and sometimes the bark of the sandbox tree, *javillo* (*Hura polyandra* Baill.). This last is less effective. To fish with vines or barks, a portion of the river is hemmed in by the men who construct a wall of stone at the upper and the lower end. They then mash the material chosen and throw it in the dammed section. The fish come to the surface stupefied, and are gathered by the men. The *Boruca* prefer to fish, however, with spears. These are of two sorts: long white canes between 57 and 58 inches long with an [227] extended tip of pejibaye palm about 18 inches in length with several barbs at the end, and a shorter cane about 40 inches long, also with a pejibaye end, but without barbs and with a steel needle-like protrusion fastened to the pejibaye section. The short spear is used in the local creek for small fish, while the longer one is

226 used in the river for larger fish. The pejibaye part is fitted into the cane and tied with string. The string used for fishing is always made of *pita* (*Aechmea magdalenae* André) (see p. 15). Occasionally a bow is used to shoot the fish. The only difference between the arrow and the spear, is that the arrow has a trifle shorter shaft.

Crayfish and river crabs are caught by hand, chiefly by the young boys who remove the stones in the stream and catch the shell fish from under them. It is nothing unusual that a hundred or more are caught at one time, the result being enjoyed by practically the whole tribe.

252 [415] **Food Preparation.** The food of the *Boruca* is cooked in earthenware vessels, and, if the means of the family permit, in iron pots. These are placed on top of the three hearth stones, which are on the earthen floor, or on the *fogón*, or stove (see p. 12): For grinding grain, metates or grinding stones, called *tumbas* in Costa Rica, are used. These are natural boulders worn smooth on top. The grinding is done with a smaller flat stone with wide rounded edges. This stone is held up-right on the edges and is rolled from side to side, and not pushed backward and forward as in the greater part of Central America (see fig. 5, *a*). The small metates found in ancient graves are never used for corn, but frequently for grinding cacao, often with a pestle-like stone as the grinder.

[412]

264 415 When food is not taken by hand from the vessel in which it is cooked, it is served on cheap tin plates, or, in poorer households, in gourds (see p. 19), and eaten either with the fingers, a spoon, or a fork.

258 [263 484] One of the most important elements of food of the *Boruca* is salt (see p. 24). The *Boruca* make a trip to the coast yearly to extract the famous *sal de piedra*, or rock salt, which lasts indefinitely, and has a fishy strong flavor. This rock salt is made by gathering the driftwood on the beach and burning it. A *haba* (a large-holed basket made of a vine or tree fiber, see p. 15) is lined with leaves and hung over a clay vessel. The ashes are put into the *haba* and sea water poured over them. The residue from this filtering process falls into the clay pot. This residue is cooked until it is dry and then recooked, about three times in all. The result

224 262 this method of hunting that only cold food may be eaten before the hunt as hot food brings bad luck.

226 **Fishing.** The most common method of fishing is with the bow and barbed or straight palm-wood arrow (fig. 3, *b*) $\frac{2}{3}$. Small fish are sometimes killed by the blow of a machete and hooks are occasionally used. Grasshoppers [825] are the favorite bait. These are caught and [227] kept in a gourd in which air holes have been [415] bored and a corncob is used as a stopper or cap until ready for use. Grasshoppers can live five days in such a container. Conical casting nets, similar to those used by the Guaymí of Panama, are also employed. On the Pacific side, amongst the Bribri, sometimes the stream is dammed and a wooden fish trap is used.

Next to the bow and arrow, however, the most popular manner of fishing is with poisons. [278] The two most frequently used are obtained [824] from a tree (*Phyllantus* sp. Pittieri) and from a vine (*Serjania* sp.).[73] The tree poison blinds and kills all fish, and is so strong that the day after a person has handled it, it is common for his face to remain swollen and to hurt. When this poison is used, the river is dammed with tree trunks downstream. Around four o'clock in the morning thirty or so men begin to [462] scrape or shred pieces of the *Phyllantus* into [857] the water. Non-pregnant women and children gather downstream to collect the fish in baskets (*havas*). The organizer of this event receives one or two fish from each participant, the number depending on the total amount caught, and can keep all that he himself [178] catches. Today, permission has to be obtained [625] from the police agent in Talamanca and the organizer has to give him a share.

The vine colors the water green but only stuns the fish. It is used in small creeks and not large rivers. Only two men are needed to fish in this way. The vine, leaves, and stem are beaten into small pieces with a stick and then are thrown into the dammed waterway. [278] A third fish poison is sometimes prepared from [824] a tuber which resembles the *ñame*. It is called *wiwakri* in Bribri and is mashed and thrown into the water.

252 **Food Preparation.** On the whole, food is

[73] For the indigenous names *see* Plant List in Appendix.

$\frac{1}{2}$ [see category 116 - END PLATE 2 - ANALYST.]

warns when it is going to rain by howling in the morning and in the afternoon.

(17) Why the Cuyeo[202] Has a Tightly Closed Beak[203]

(*Bribri*)

Once *sibu* became ill and he sent the *cuyeo* to find out if he would get well. The bird took it upon himself to consult no one but to tell *sibu* that the answer was he would die. As a punishment for this, he, *sibu*, pressed the cuyeo's beak tightly shut.

RECREATION

of food and drink will be offered them. Conversation, in this case, is confined almost entirely to the men or if there are women with the travelers, they speak separately with the women of the household.

Hunting and fishing may in a sense be classed as recreation for the men as well as part of their livelihood. Here again, except in the rare instances of community use of fish poisons, it is a family matter.

Women and young girls of the same family, particularly among the Bribri, are fond of gathering at the side of a stream to wash clothes and grind foodstuffs. They swim and sing, praising in their songs the virtues of their respective swains (*see* Songs). This is the closest these people come to what might be termed a normal visit.

Cursing is not usual. The worst phrase a Bribri can use against another is:

bé	*ra*	*webLa*	*suLue*	*es*	*béra*	*bəmitsɛn.*
you	are	man	bad	like	devil	take (carry off).

The really unpleasant word here is *suLue* which means bad or ugly and is applied as a curse. A milder term is *bikési* which means useless, lazy, or coward. In Cabécar, however, the equivalent of this is *səkəɲé* which is a very strong term.

Reunions. Reunions, although pre-Columbian

[202] *See* Linguistic Texts: *Iipa* (coyeo).

6: Stone E-5 (1956-1959) 1962

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Bribri
Cabecar

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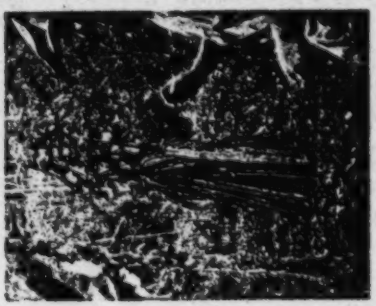
b



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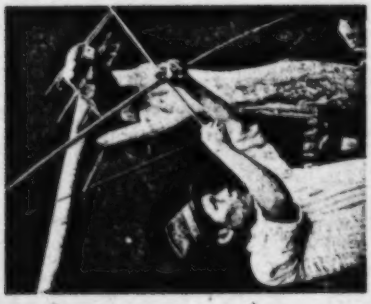

a

c

a, Method of shooting a bow and arrow. b, Shooting fish. c, Using a blow gun. d, Shelter for chickens.

[END Plate 2]